

ty, not men of hate; and men of breadth of spirit and understanding, not men who preach meanness and misunderstanding.

To the extent that both Indian and white have denied one another the status of responsible humans, both have demeaned the republican ideal. To the extent that hatred and war have prevailed, we have belittled the ideals and concepts of the Founding Fathers—and desecrated our own humanity. Every blow, physical and verbal, red and white, has diminished us and damaged the fabric of ourselves. To continue a system of special privilege based on the sins real and imagined of the past three centuries—and the sins are on both sides of the racial barrier—is to continue the Indian wars into an indefinite future.

The great chief of the Sioux, Crazy Horse, might well have been addressing today's problems when he stated, "The war will end when the Indian is treated as every other American."

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## Letter From the Lower Right

by John Shelton Reed

### *Still Fighting the Civil War*

The influx of Northern migrants to these parts continues to produce misunderstanding. Some time ago, the good people of Hillsborough, North Carolina, gave up their right to shoot marauding vermin in their own backyards to an official municipal squirrel-shooter. Citizens whose nut trees were being sacked, gardens despoiled, or houses chewed up (it happens) could call police officer William King, who would come over with his .22 and take care of the problem.

Now, according to the *Chapel Hill Observer*, a pushy newcomer has objected to this arrangement. "This is just pagan, to be out there shooting squirrels," says Karen McKinnon. Last November, she took her case to the town council, which responded by

hedging the practice about with bureaucratic restrictions. Owners of all adjoining property must now be notified before a squirrel is shot, and the person requesting the shooting must be given a leaflet describing nonlethal methods of squirrel-removal. Am I the only one who finds it weird that it's harder to kill a squirrel than to get an abortion?

Ms. McKinnon believes that the long-term solution may lie in importing owls to control the squirrel population, but it's not clear why that's preferable. I think if I were a squirrel I'd prefer a .22 slug in the eye to being torn limb from limb by an owl. In fact, I'd prefer it even though I'm not a squirrel. Moreover, I don't understand why an owl is seen as a natural predator and Officer King is not. But then, like most natives, I don't share Ms. McKinnon's Disneyesque view of rodents. Hillsborough resident Cecil Sanford, brother of our lesser-known U.S. senator, quoted a farmer friend on the subject of squirrels: "They ain't nothing but a rat with a bushy tail."

My solution would be to kill two birds with one stone (as the pagan expression has it): I'd arm welfare recipients and encourage them to forage. They could eat what they shoot, or sell it. Squirrel-based Brunswick stew is \$7.00 a bowl at one fancy Chapel Hill restaurant.

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That story illustrates a problem I have, living where I do. I don't want to leave the South, and don't plan to, but I'm afraid it's leaving me. Let me explain.

There's a letter from Robert Frost in which he tells a friend of his plans to move back to New England and get "Yankier and Yankier." That's just about what he did, too, and most of us are glad of it. America's a better place because he did that.

Twenty-odd years ago, living in New York City, my wife and I came to a similar resolve about the South. Unlike poor, tormented Tom Wolfe (the Elder), we knew we *could* go home again. We did it a couple of times a year, and we wanted to do it for good. New York's a great city, but—well, I just had a letter from one of my former students who says she's had enough, too: "It's definitely not a good place for decent, polite Southerners, not even

high-strung ones like myself."

But living in the North had changed my idea of where "home" was. I'd come to realize that I could find balm for my Yankee-jangled sensibilities not just in my particular East Tennessee hometown, but 'most anywhere in the South. Driving home, my chronic heartburn always let up somewhere around Hagerstown, Maryland, on old U.S. 11—about the same place it started up again on the trip back north.

Walker Percy wrote of a similar experience in *The Last Gentleman*. When Will Barrett and Jamie headed south, they would park their camper at night in Carolina and stroll to a service station or fishing camp or grocery store, where they'd have a beer or fill the tank with spring water or lay in eggs and country butter and grits and slab bacon; then back to the camper, which they'd show off to the storekeeper, he ruminating a minute and: all I got to say is, don't walk off and leave the keys in it—and so on in the complex Southern tactic of assaying a sort of running start, a joke before the joke, 10 assumptions shared and a common stance of rhetoric and a whole shared set of special ironies and opposites. He was home. Even though he was hundreds of miles from home and had never been here and it was not even the same here—it was older and more decorous, more tended to and a dream with the past—he was home.

So I finished my studies in New York, shook the Northern dust from my feet, and moved just in time for my first child to get "Durham, North Carolina" on her birth certificate—important to me, if not to her.

But now I look around and find that the North seems to have followed me. Our town and those nearby, like Hillsborough, have recently been flooded with immigrants seeking economic opportunity, gracious living, and year-round golf. I don't blame them. But please don't blame me for being less than wild about this development.

Northerners are nothing new in these parts, and in small numbers they used to provide a pleasant leaven. Some of them worked at fitting in (which isn't all that hard), many more adopted a becoming diffidence, and even the ones who remained defiantly Yankee offered a stimulating counterpoint to the prevailing, easygoing ways.

But there was no question whose region we were in.

Sometime recently, though, we passed a tipping point that's as easy to recognize as it is hard to define. There are now so many newcomers that they're no longer just the seasoning in the stew; they've become a lumpy ingredient in their own right, one that shows no signs of dissolving. People from places like Ohio and Michigan are moving into neighborhoods full of other people from Ohio and Michigan, and they all go down and get the *New York Times* on Sunday. Flannery O'Connor liked to tell a story about an Atlanta real estate salesman showing a migrant couple around. "You'll like this neighborhood," he says. "There's not a Southerner for miles." I used to find that funnier than I do now.

No offense, Northern folks, but I like the South because it's full of Southerners. You all are fine people, but you make me *tired*. I came here to be with people I don't have to explain things to, you understand? People who share my views about things like squirrels.

We've almost reached the point around here where *Southerners* are the ones who have to worry about fitting in. One of our students, a local boy, complained recently in the college paper that people are always coming up to him and saying "I just love to hear you talk." "Let's get one thing straight," he wrote, "we are in the South. Therefore, I do not have the accent." Besides, it's impolite: "If we were sitting around the beach house in Cape Cahd discussing clam chowdah or Uncle Joe's haht cahndishen, I wouldn't stand up and say, 'Hot damn, you boys shore talk funny.' It just wouldn't be gentlemanlike." What really bugged him, though, is what bugs me: "There's something about having to defend my region when I'm still in it that I don't like."

Students aside, Chapel Hill looks more and more like Princeton these days. Some people think that's fine, and not all of them are from New Jersey either. Our local realtors apparently love what's going on, and even some people who aren't making any money off of it seem to have bought the view that it's impolite to complain about the increasing presence of unasimilated Northerners.

Not long ago a reporter from the *Charlotte Observer* asked what I thought about the fact that someone can live in the South now and never have to come to terms with it. I told her I thought it was a shame. Soon thereafter, my long-suffering department chairman got a telephone call from an irate reader, a native North Carolinian (she said) who objected to my opinions or, anyway, to my expressing them. She insisted that I was "still fighting the Civil War" and demanded that he fire me. When he wearily told her that it's too late, since I have tenure, she said she'd take her case to the president of the university and to the governor, if necessary.

Now, I'm not worried about that; both of those worthies are adept at dealing with cranks, as I have reason to know, having dealt with them in that capacity myself. And there's a nice irony to knowing that the last member of my department whose head was demanded by angry citizens was a gentleman and scholar whose offense was believing 50 years ago that black folks were entitled to be treated like human beings and American citizens. But let's think about that accusation: still fighting the Civil War.

Non-Southerners are never accused of that, no matter what they say about the South. Neither are Southerners who make it clear that they prefer the Northern way. You get charged with that offense if and only if you are a Southerner who would like to see the South stay Southern. And it's a sorry fact that the charge is often filed by other Southerners, like my accuser. Some of us like to joke about suburban Washington's being "Occupied Virginia," but let me tell you it's no fun living in Vichy, North Carolina, either.

Look, I don't want to impose Southern ways on the world; I just want to hang on to them in the South. I don't think that one Princeton is too many, just that one is enough. I even feel that way about California: I'm glad it's out there, for all sorts of reasons. If the Great Wen, DC, were just another unpleasant East Coast city—why, I'd say let it be. It's like food: when I go to New England, I *want* to eat broiled scrod and Indian pudding; I just don't want them on every menu down here, that's all. And I think it would be nice if New Englanders in these parts

would eat Brunswick stew and okra, or at least keep their opinions about Southern food to themselves.

If that's still fighting the Civil War—make the most of it.

*John Shelton Reed writes from Chapel Hill, North Carolina, which he says New Yorkers will find a great place to visit, but they wouldn't want to live there.*

## Letter From the Heartland

by Jane Greer

### *Bleary-Eyed for Christ*

Anxious to be liked, mainstream Churches roll over and piddle on the floor regularly these days, and seem to do so with the greatest vigor in the spring, when the pasqueflowers sprout on virgin soil and the "renewal" comes to town.

Fundamentalist Protestants have had "renewals" for ages and call them "revivals." Neophyte Catholics and mainstream Protestants make up the rules as they go along and have many names for the extravaganzas—Reach, Renew, Cursillo—whose true name is Legion.

In a moment of weakness last spring, my husband and I showed an interest in attending a Cursillo weekend sponsored by my Episcopal church, to be held at a local high school. My curiosity was piqued when some of our more stolid parishioners (or is that redundant when referring to Episcopalians?) waxed breathless with excitement.

I grew even more curious trying to get someone, anyone, to tell me what would *happen* on that weekend. (Cursillos, for adults only, usually run from late Friday afternoon to Sunday morning.) Leaders of these events must undergo rigorous training, professional groups travel from church to church to emcee the affairs, and I just wanted to know what we'd be *doing*. All of the trained parishioners I asked looked off into the distance and struggled for the words to describe what I might find during the weekend. It was all ethereally vague: There was something about a speaker and guitars and prayer and breaking up into small discussion